



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

MORE THAN 300 PRE-COLUMBIAN PERUVIAN ARTIFACTS RECOVERED BY ICE AND BSO

- ONE OF THE LARGEST EVER RECOVERIES OF PERUVIAN ARTIFACTS IN THE U.S. -

MIAMI- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents recovered and seized 322 pre-Columbian Peruvian artifacts this week after a two-month joint investigation between ICE and the Broward Sheriff's Office (BSO).

The pre-Columbian era refers to a period preceding the exploration of the Americas by Christopher Columbus. The artifacts date as far back as 1500 B.C.

ICE agents and BSO officers discovered the artifacts during the execution of three federal search warrants at various South Florida locations. The artifacts, which include ancient pottery, burial shrouds and gold jewelry, are believed to have been smuggled into the country from Peru.

All of the artifacts were examined and authenticated preliminarily by an art historian who heads the Department of Art and Art History at Florida International University (FIU). This is believed to be one of the largest seizures of pre-Columbian artifacts smuggled from Peru into the United States. Among the items recovered were a clay vessel estimated to be 3,500-years-old, a clay statue estimated to be 1,800-years-old and a burial shroud linked to ancient Peruvian royalty.

"Thanks to the dedication of ICE agents and BSO officers we have been able to recover these cultural treasures belonging to the people of Peru," said John Paletti, acting special agent-in-charge in Miami. "These items are not souvenirs. They are the thread of a nation rich in cultural heritage."

"We were pleased to be able to work closely with ICE on this case," said Broward Sheriff Ken Jenne. "This is just the latest example of the close working relationship between the Broward Sheriff's Office and federal law enforcement."

"The Peruvian government views with high regard these recoveries of the World Cultural Heritage, in this specific case of artifacts from early Peruvian civilizations," said Jorge E. Roman, consul general of Peru in Miami. "We would like to thank the authorities of ICE and BSO for their professional investigation and for the recoveries of these Peruvian treasures."

ICE agents arrested one individual in Miami who was allegedly linked to the smuggling of the priceless artifacts. The individual is in U.S. Marshals custody pending the outcome of the case. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida will be handling the criminal prosecution. The ICE and BSO investigation into the case continues.

ICE believes that other pre-Columbian artifacts may have been sold to individuals within the South Florida community. Anyone with information regarding the sale of the items is encouraged to call ICE's toll-free hotline at 1-866-DHS-2ICE.

These items are just the latest cultural properties that ICE agents have seized and returned to their rightful owners in recent months. Some other cases investigated by ICE include:

- On April 1, 2004, ICE agents in New Mexico seized a stolen, 500-year-old Judeo-Christian altarpiece that was being offered for sale at a price of \$225,000 in an art consignment shop. The altarpiece had been stolen from a convent in Mexico. ICE is presently protecting the altarpiece and intends to return it to the people of Mexico.
- On Feb. 6, 2004, ICE returned to Switzerland the oldest surviving example of the proto type, self-loading 1898 Borchardt Luger pistol. The pistol, bearing serial number five, was stolen in 1996 from a Switzerland museum. ICE agents seized the rare pistol from an internationally known firearms collector after a four-month probe. Experts found the pistol was authentic and worth \$720,000.
- ICE agents recovered a 14th Century Hebrew manuscript stolen by Nazis in World War II. The manuscript had been smuggled into the United States by U.S. Citizen Aaron Stefansky after he purchased it from an antiquities dealer in Israel. On Nov. 18, 2003, ICE returned the manuscript, valued at \$68,000, to the Jewish Community Organization of Austria.
- In Sept. 2003, ICE returned 279 smuggled Pre-Columbian artifacts to the government of Honduras, some of which were 1,400 years old. ICE agents arrested an Ohio man and a Guatemalan citizen in connection with this smuggling venture, both of whom were convicted.
- In March 2003, ICE deployed teams of agents to Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom to perform a range of investigative functions. As part of this effort, ICE agents worked with the U.S. military to recover artifacts and national treasures missing from the Iraqi Museum. ICE agents ultimately recovered 39,400 manuscripts and more than 1,000 historical treasures, including the fabled "Treasure of Nimrud," a collection of more than 600 precious items dating back to 800 B.C.

According to a memorandum of understanding signed in 1997, the Peruvian government will be able to claim the archeological artifacts seized by ICE and BSO officials.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.